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Christians in Solidarity with East Timor

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MEDIA RELEASE

Church groups call for self-determination in East Timor

104 Church organisations from Asia, the Pacific and Australia, have endorsed a strongly worded declaration which condemns the Indonesian occupation of East Timor and affirms the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination.

The declaration comes at a time of renewed public concern over the situation in East Timor arising from fresh reports of continuing fighting and human rights abuses transmitted by the Fretilin radio from inside the disputed territory.

The declaration has been circulated by the Melbourne based Christians in Solidarity with East Timor in response to fresh appeals by the head of the East Timorese Catholic Church, Mgr Carlos Belo, for international Church support for the basic rights of the East Timorese people.

Last December Mgr Belo wrote to the French Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace: **'Despite all the forces against us, we continue to hold and disseminate that the only solution to the East Timor conflict is a political and diplomatic one, and this solution should include, above all, the respect for the right of a people for self-determination... As long as this is not implemented, there will not be a peaceful solution for East Timor'.**

Talks between Indonesia and Portugal on the future of East Timor have been convened by the UN Secretary-General. The East Timorese people, however, have not been represented at the discussions or consulted and no commitment to consult them has been given by the UN. The declaration affirms 'that

negotiations will not lead to a just settlement unless they involve representatives of the East Timorese people including those who resist the present occupation'. The declaration also calls for 'an end to hostilities' and for 'access to relief and development agencies and to independent visitors, journalists and diplomats'.

35 Protestant and Catholic groups from Asia, 53 from Australia, and 16 from the Pacific, have signed the declaration. They comprise bodies such as religious orders, lay organisations, Uniting Church presbyteries, and a number of official bodies such as the Japanese, Hong Kong and New Zealand Catholic Commissions for Justice and Peace and the Protestant National Christian Council of Japan and officers of the Pacific Council of Churches. A complete list of signatories is attached.

An East Timorese Catholic priest, Father Francisco Fernandes, will present the declaration and a list of the supporting Church groups to the Christian Conference of Asia during its assembly in Seoul, South Korea, June 25-July 5. Fr Fernandes, who will attend the CCA assembly as an observer, is chaplain to the East Timorese refugee community in Perth, Western Australia.

Further information: Christine Dix 03/419.5588 (w); 03/484.2286 (h)

Declaration on behalf of East Timor

Recognising that the territory of East Timor has been illegally occupied by Indonesia since December 1975, inflicting extreme loss of life and destruction;

Recognising that the Indonesian policy to isolate East Timor prevents the ICRC and other relief and development agencies from reaching those in need, and denies the international community opportunities to assess the wishes of the people independently;

Condemning the human rights violations committed since 1975, as reported by church leaders in East Timor and by independent human rights organisations;

Recognising that the East Timorese have been denied their right to self-determination;

Welcoming, finally, UN General Assembly Resolution 37/30 which asked the UN Secretary-General 'to initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned, with a view to exploring avenues for achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem', and acknowledging the steps which have been taken to bring Portugal and Indonesia into negotiations;

We affirm that negotiations will not lead to a just settlement unless they:

1. *Involve representatives of the East Timorese people including those who resist the present occupation.*
2. *Secure an end to hostilities which prevent the people of East Timor and their representatives from contributing freely to negotiations leading to self-determination.*
3. *Provide internationally acceptable conditions of access to relief and development agencies and to independent visitors, journalists and diplomats.*
4. *Include an act of self-determination, which is free from interference and verified by international observers acceptable to the East Timorese people.*

We commend all international initiatives which observe these principles, and will call upon our government to support actively a process of negotiation conducted on such terms.

AUSTRALIA

1. Brigidine Sisters - Clovelly, NSW
2. Australian Student Christian Movement
3. 13 individual Christians - Alice Springs, Northern Territory
4. Uniting Church - Fitzroy, Victoria
5. World Christian Action - Victoria
6. Christians for Justice in the Philippines - Melbourne, Victoria
7. Church and Society Commission of North Queensland
8. Catholic Education Office: Mission and Justice Group - Victoria
9. Australian Catholic Relief
10. Religious Education Centre - Ballarat Diocese, Victoria
11. Clergy for Peace - Victoria
12. Pax Christi - Sydney, NSW
13. Catholics for Peace - Ballarat, Victoria
14. Catholics for Peace - Melbourne, Victoria
15. Diocesan Youth Apostolate Team - Archdiocese of Melbourne, Victoria
16. National Catholic Missionary Council
17. Catholic Social Justice Groups Network - Melbourne, Victoria
18. Yarra Theological Union - Box HIll, Victoria
19. Asian Bureau Australia
20. Action for World Development - NSW Region
21. Action for World Development - Victorian Region
22. Justice Extension Group - Morphett Vale, South Australia
23. Catholic Community - Adelaide University, South Australia
24. Taskforce of Baptist Social Justice Group - Newport, Victoria
25. Froggatt Christian Community - Ainslie, ACT
26. Quaker Peace and Social Justice Committee - Hobart, Tasmania
27. St. Mary's Social Justice Group - Greensborough, Victoria
28. St. Joseph's Peace and Justice Group - Collingwood, Victoria
29. St. Colman's Social Guild - Mortlake, Victoria
30. Presbytery of Nepean, Uniting Church - Melbourne, Victoria
31. St. Columba's Parish Pastoral Council - Ballarat, Victoria
32. Holy Family Parish - Bell Park, Victoria
33. St. Thomas Moore's Peace and Justice Group - Belgrave, Victoria
34. Catholic Social Justice Group - Canberra, ACT
35. Uniting Church - Montmorency, Victoria
36. Parish Council - Warrnambool, Victoria

AUSTRALIA continued

37. St. Colman's Parish - Mortlake, Victoria
38. Good Shephard Social Justice Group - Mulgrave, Victoria
39. Vaucluse College - Richmond, Victoria
40. Presentation Social Justice Group - Elsternwick, Victoria
41. Sisters of Mercy - Adelaide, South Australia
42. Sisters of Mercy: Mercy and Justice Committee - Ballarat, Victoria
43. Sisters of Mercy - Ballarat North, Victoria
44. 3 individual Christians - Ballarat Diocese, Victoria
45. Sisters of Mercy Justice Group - Rosanna, Victoria
46. Sisters of Sion - Kensington, Victoria
47. Society of the Sacred Heart - Mosman, NSW
48. Sisters of St. Joseph Provincial Council - Victorian Province
49. Little Sisters of Jesus - Alice Springs, Northern Territory
50. Good Shephard Sisters - Richmond, Victoria
51. Good Shephard Sisters Provincial Council - Australia
52. Brigidine Sisters - Coonamble, NSW
53. Presbytery of Illawarra, Uniting Church - Wollongong East, NSW

FIJI

1. Officers of Pacific Conference of Churches - Suva

HONG KONG

1. Mary Knoll Sisters - Chinese University
2. Mary Knoll Sisters - Local community
3. Missionary Sisters of St. Columban - Kowloon
4. P.I.M.E. Fathers Social Concern Group - Wong Tai Sin
5. Canossian Daughters of Charity
6. Star of the Sea Church - Chaiwan
7. Missions Etrangeres de Paris - Chaiwan
8. International Young Christian Workers - Asia/Pacific Secretariate
9. Justice and Peace Commission
10. Centre for the Progress of Peoples - Kowloon
11. Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre - Shatin
12. Hotline Asia Oceania - Kowloon

JAPAN

1. National Christian Council Peace Committee
2. National Christian Council
3. Christian Social Center - Hiroshima
4. World Friendship Center - Hiroshima
5. Resource Center for Philippine Concerns - Tokyo
6. Research-Action Institute for the Koreans - Tokyo
7. Christian Committee to Support the Independence and Peace of East Timor - Zentsuji
8. Nippon Kirieuto Kijodan, Ozorayama Church
9. Mennonite Christ Church - Hiroshima
10. Kure Heian Church - Kureshi
11. Kure Yamate Church - Hiroshima-ken
12. Order of Capuchin Friars Minor - Okiwawa
13. Missionary Society of St. Columban - Japan Region
14. Y.W.C.A. - Kumamato
15. Y.W.C.A. - Yokohama
16. Y.W.C.A. - Kabe
17. Y.W.C.A. - Osaka
18. Y.W.C.A. - Kyoto
19. Y.W.C.A. - Kure
20. Catholic Council for Justice and Peace
21. Y.W.C.A. - Nagoya

NEW ZEALAND

1. District Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul - Wanganui
2. Sacred Heart College - Wanganui
3. Sacred Heart Amnesty
4. National Team of 'Renew' - Wellington
5. St. Gregory's Social Concerns Group - Christchurch
6. St. Mary's Catholic Parish Council - Wanganui
7. Rangiora Parish Council - Rangiora
8. Council of Priest - Christchurch Diocese
9. Catholic Commission for Justice and Development - Christchurch
10. Friends Settlement - Wanganui